

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
USMISSION USNATO
SECDEF WASHDC
USNMR SHAPE
USCINCLANT

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 2167

SHAPE FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM, MILI, NO, SV
SUBJECT: LABOR PARTY CHAIRMAN ON ERW/RB DECISION

REF: (A) OSLO 1777, (B) OSLO 1999

1. NORWAY'S LABOR PARTY CHAIRMAN REIULF STEEN PRAISED PRESIDENT CARTER'S ERW DECISION IN HIS MAY DAY SPEECH AT STAVANGER. NORWEGIANS GREETED THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION WITH GREAT ENTHUSIASM, AND DECLARED THAT LEONID BREZHNEV SHOULD RESPOND TO CARTER'S DECISION WITH A REDUCTION IN WARSAW PACT FORCES. THIS IS THE MOST CONSPICUOUS STATEMENT BY A LEADING NORWEGIAN POLITICIAN MAKING THE LINKAGE BETWEEN THE DECISION TO POSTPONE ERW DEVELOPMENT AND APPROPRIATE RESPONSE FROM THE SOVIETS.
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2. STEEN, WHO IS ALSO CHAIRMAN OF THE STORTING'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, ALSO TRACED IN HIS SPEECH THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CONSIDERATION OF ERW DEVELOPMENT AND THE WARSAW PACT'S ADVANTAGE IN TANK FORCES, ADDING THAT THE CONSIDERATION OF ERW WAS NOT THE FIRST TIME IN GLOBAL MILITARY STRATEGY THAT NUCLEAR WEAPONS HAD BEEN PROPOSED IN AN EFFORT TO BALANCE THE OTHER

SIDE'S PREPONDERANCE IN CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS. IT WILL, HE SAID, BE ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT FOR MOSCOW TO BE FORTHCOMING IN ITS RESPONSE TO THE US DECISION, LEST INCREASES OF WARSAW PACT CONVENTIONAL FORCES CONTINUE TO BE ANSWERED BY THE WEST IN THE FORM OF NEW TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS. IF THIS SHOULD HAPPEN, STEEN CONTINUED, THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN NUCLEAR AND CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS MIGHT BE LOST ENTIRELY, WITH A CONSEQUENT RISK FOR PEACE.

3. IF THE US DECIDED TO TAKE UP ERW DEVELOPMENT AGAIN, EVEN IN THE FACE OF NO RESPONSE FROM THE USSR, THE NORWEGIAN LABOR PARTY WOULD BE OBLIGED, STEEN SAID, TO RESTATE ITS OPPOSITION TO DEVELOPMENT OF ERW AND ITS POSITIONING IN EUROPE.

4. COMMENT: STEEN'S FORTHRIGHT REMARKS ABOUT THE LINKAGE OF THE ERW DECISION AND A RESPONSE FROM THE SOVIETS STANDS IN STARK CONTRAST TO THE APPROACH TAKEN BY PM ODVAR NORDLI IN HIS RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT BREZHNEV'S LETTER. THE PM'S REPLY MADE NO SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO LINKAGE, AND PLACED EMPHASIS ON NORWAY'S TRADITIONAL OPPOSITION TO THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE. IN HIS REPLY, NORDLI ALSO PRAISED THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION ON ERW, ADDING THAT HE HOPED IT WOULD CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE CONDUCIVE TO PROGRESS IN ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT, (REFTEL A).

5. NORDLI RELEASED HIS REPLY TO BREZHNEV AT THE CONCLUSION OF
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THE STORTING'S DEBATE ON DISARMAMENT, WHERE IT WAS CLEAR THAT A STRONG ALL-PARTY CONSENSUS AGAINST ERW EXISTED, AND SHORTLY AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION. WHILE WE CANNOT BE CERTAIN, STEEN'S STATEMENT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN A RESPONSE TO OUR APRIL 21 APPROACH TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER (REFTEL B) IN WHICH THE LACK OF SYMMETRY IN NORDLI'S RESPONSE WAS POINTED OUT.
BREMER

NOTE BY OC/T: LIMDIS CAPTION ADDED PER D. SCOTT, S/S-O.

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